SASKATOON ATARI SUPPORT GROUP.

THE CURSOR

SASKATOON ATARI SUPPORT GROUP

BOX 8191
SASKATOON, SASK.
S7K 6C5

SASG is an independent, non-profit computer club and user's group. This group is not affiliated with Atari Corp. or any other commercial organization. We are a support group interested in sharing the latest news, reviews, rumors and public domain software with members. We meet the second Tuesday of each month, September through June.

If you are not a member, you are welcome to attend three meetings, then we hope you will become a member.

WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT----------YOU CAN BENEFIT FROM THE GROUP!

CLUB MEMBERSHIP:

- Membership is $20.00 a year plus 1 diskette for each family (1 or more persons) from September 1 to August 31.
- A person can attend 3 meetings only, then must become a member.
- A member may bring a guest to 3 meetings.

CLUB BENEFITS:

- Borrowing and copying privileges on the club's public domain software library
- Borrowing privileges on the club's commercial software library.
- Receive the monthly newsletter (1 per family) of informative articles, software reviews, hardware reviews, programming topics, rumors, etc.
- Access to different Atari newsletters, manuals and general information
- Special theme presentations at each meeting on equipment, software,tutorials, methods; and time for Special Interest Group discussion
- Free advice, assistance and support from members
- Club Bulletin Board - 665-0468

EXECUTIVE OF SASG FOR 86-87

President	Richard Briand	242-9580
Vice President	Mike Hansen	955-1401
Secretary-Treasurer	Sandy Woynarski	373-7591
Newsletter Editors	John Cook	477-1748
	Ron Loomis	931-2411
Membership Director	Stan Woynarski	373-7591
Software Librarian	Gary Maloff	242-0413
Documentation Librarian	Roy Pugh	343-9866 (evenings)

AND THAT'S THE WAY IT WAS

Richard Briand
President S.A.S.G.

The month of May brings us to the close of another year at the Saskatoon Atari Support Group. As our interests turn outside from our computer desks I would like to reflect on our last year.

As always a club like ours is only as good as the people in it. We've had some very dedicated people on the executive to help keep the club going. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you for your welcomed assistance. That is not to say all the efforts this past year came from the executive either. To the members at large (nothing personal) thanks for your ideas and contributions.

A quick review of the year:

September was our first meeting of the new year. The meeting was mostly club business, a chance to get to know your new executive and a review of the clubs goals.

October brought us our first newsletter of the year. It was a good beginning as each newsletter got better. This was also the month that Telecable 10, our cable community programming channel, came to tape our meeting. The featured topic was graphics programs. Shawn Ferenbach did an excellent presentation. By the way his artwork on the 8-bit computer is in the club P.D. library. Also an update on the airing of the Telecable 10 show featuring our club has still not been planned. I will try to have more for you at the May meeting.

November was a very different meeting. It was the first time a non-member addressed the club. Mr. Kelvin Jones from CANADA CUSTOMS came to talk to us about the new regulations and procedures for importing goods into Canada. It may have been a bit long but now we know that if you were to import cocaine not only will they arrest you but they have an import duty on this controlled substance.

December as usual was a copy nite. Our P.D. libraries, 8 and 16 bit were both there in all their finest.

January brought on the word proccesing discussion. A very useful topic for many of us.

February was music month at the S.A.S.G. We were treated to a most impressive display of the MIDI capabilities on the ST.

March featured games. Members were invited to bring their favourite games to show everyone else. I realized the fantastic potential of Flight Simulator II by using it with '40 Great Flight Simulator Adventures' by Charles Gulick from COMPUTE! BOOKS.

April was mostly club business by electing a new executive. Roy Pugh also discussed programming languages with those so inclined after the meeting.

May is our last meeting and another copy nite.

All thats left to say is best wishes and good luck to the incoming executive.

THE ELECTION OF A NEW SASG EXECUTIVE

Don't you feel different when you wake up in the morning? That's the result of what happened in the second Tuesday of April 1987.

Richard Briand, our former president, managed to half-return to private life, becoming for our club what his French ancestors used to call l'eminence grise.

Richard lured different fresh-blood members into accepting positions of crushing responsibility, and only afterwards announced his half-departure.

All members enthusiastically adopted the suggestion to have Stan Woynarski as president. Stan always comes to the meetings with a Samsonite he keeps half open, full of papers, giving a feeling of reliability, like a disk that never fails.

The Vice President is Keith Morphy, whose amazing energy and ability will show as soon as he will cease to leave this newsletter without the advertising flurry he committed himself to obtain. His name is spelled with an o not with an u, which is not as much the Irish way as the classic Greek one inaugurated by Morpheus or Morphaeus, the famous God of sleep.

Here's a full list of

EXECUTIVE OF SASG FOR 87-88

PRESIDENT	STAN WOYNARSKI	373-7591
VICE PRESIDENT	KEITH MORPHY	477-0173
SECRETARY TREASURER	SANDY WOYNARSKI	373-7591
MEMBERSHIP	RICHARD BRIAND	242-9580
NEWSLETTER EDITOR	SERGE FARCASAN	931-3275
LIBRARIAN	ROY PUGH	(evenings)343-9866
ST LIBRARIAN	GORD MALINOWSKI	373-8644
SYSOP	GARY MALOFF	242-0413

(AREA CODE: 306).

FLYERS CONSPIRE

AGAINST THE SASKATARIANS!

An investigative report
by SERGE FARCASAN

The members of the Saskatoon Atari Support Group--the Saskatarians--should be aware of the unusual events which led to the semi-retirement of Richard Briand, our former president.

And do you know what really led to the election of a new president? (Whose name, incidentally, is the only one harder to spell than Farcasan--Mr. Stanley Woynarski.)

We won't call the events a *conspiracy* or a *plot*. Let the reader judge!

HAS MARY POPPINS FORCED RICHARD BRIAND TO RESIGN?

At first sight, there's no connection between Mary Poppins and Richard Briand--except what people call fly or flying. Indeed, the famous Mary Poppins used to fly (with an umbrella).

On the other side, Richard is an air controller. Nobody can fly over Saskatoon without his knowledge (except, of course, the birds).

The connection didn't appear striking until two months ago, when some of our members saw Richard on a playground (located between the Silverwood public school and the one called Sister O'Brien). What was the air controller doing there? Brace yourselves:

He was flying a kite!

Now, in case you forgot the Disney movie--presented on channel 7 just this May--the main song of Mary Poppins and the main slogan of being semi-detached is called "GO FLY A KITE!"

Poppins charmed a serious bank manager into shrugging off his responsibilities--just go fly a kite!

That's what Richard did: he prepared himself to leave our club's presidency and go fly a kite!

But whom did Richard propose as the new president?

Stan Woynarski!

What is Stan dealing with?

We know that Richard controls all the sky above Saskatoon except for the birds!

Well, that's exactly Stan's turf: the sky and the birds!

He's working with the Government and the University to take care, sanctuary-wise, or to control the birds flying over us for migratory purposes!

See now? An air controller goes to fly a kite and leaves behind him a bird controller! It seems that these people have a determination for keeping our club in the air! Nobody else can get up there!

And they obliged me to make this newsletter as a flyer!

Now you know the reason why Roy Pugh, our documentation specialist, works every night on you know what, don't you?

He works on a flight simulator! So I have a feeling I know who, in the nineties, will succeed Stan!

BITS AND BYTES

IN LITTLE BITES

****

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, ATARI DELIVERS:
THE ERA OF THE 8 BIT 80 COLUMN ARRIVED IN THE EIGHTIES! BUT...

****

by The Editor

FLEXIBILITY, ANYONE?

The good news: Atari finally delivers the 80 column system for our 8-bit computers.

Included in the package of good news: you don't have to penetrate the poor machine. XEP-80 is a separate piece: we would have called it a software interface, but wouldn't it sound a bit old-fashioned? So they called it handler. You can plug it in your joystick, I mean the computer's port.

Just three months ago I came up with the idea of replacing text windows with two monitors: two monitors giving different images from a single computer. John Cook, if I remember correctly, explained to me very convincingly why the thing can't be done or it's not worth doing. By the time he finished persuading me, Atari had done it: "a two-monitor system, maintaining 80-column text on one display and, perhaps, graphics on the other." So says "THE OFFICIAL ATARI JOURNAL" otherwise called ATARI EXPLORER, in its good-until-June-1-1987 issue. The triumphant title announces:

"A new 80-column interface module offers increased flexibility to owners of all 8-bit Ataris."

Now if I don't need a thing to spend money on, that's flexibility. I own so much of it that I could sell some, absolutely new, still in warranty; everybody knows I never leave home without carrying my flexibility on me.

On the other hand I'm a hard-core monomaniac in one regard only: I want the 80-column for word processing!

So if I dish out $79.95 real dollars, which in our charter of rights and freedoms translates in over one hundred bucks plus federal tax plus provincial tax plus Saskatoon library & potholes tax (I'm not sure about import taxes), do I get for all that money a what-you-see-is-what-you-get word processing program? Do I? Say yes!

Why, of course! answer The Explorers. How could you believe we'll sell you a flexible 80-column without WP?

OK, says my flexible self, I buy it! I don't even ask you about the price! Just hand me over the 80 with it's word processing program!

To which THE EXPLORER shows us a bit of real flexibility:

"Atariwriter 80, a new revision of Atari's standard word processor" is "due to be released shortly."

Shortly?

SHORTLY?

SHORTLY?

This song figured among the top ten many times, splendidly interpreted by anybody trying to sell you an 8-bit: even the grocery stores specialists (read SuperValu) could brief you that an 80-column word-processor will be delivered next week, but better phone before you come. So the only thing that changed is that now you'll have to buy a handler for the case you'll have to handle an 80 WP somewhere in the future.

So, to put it simply with my famed technical expertise: what's the difference between a HANDLER and a DOORKNOB?

I don't need to hire a Silent Butler or some other Atari finances program to calculate the difference: over one hundred Canadian greenies in favor of the doorknob.

And that was the bad news.

TO BE FAIR

We have two fairness problems to solve fast enough, before somebody starts to make some fairness waves. First fairness problem: the new editor of The Cursor, you should know this, owns an eight-bit computer. That propels him into a natural bias against the sixteen bit computers, makes him be more interested or at least understand a little better an eight-bit, the way a mother of only one kid, an eight-year old one, might understand less a teenager's problems. To eliminate this prejudice our members have a choice between two options:

Option 1: Watch the editor. Threaten him, sue him, denounce him, unmask him, expose him or, if all of the above fails, call to his attention whatever 16-bit problems you want treated in the newsletter and write yourself about sweet sixteen.

Option 2 (more elegant): Offer to the editor a free 16-bit Atari computer. This way his bias will be automatically corrected.

A second fairness issue deals with the previous note, in which we quoted THE EXPLORER. I can imagine the panic in the other Atari magazines: Saskatoon, the fastest growing city in Canada, quoted only one of them.

So here's a list of "the twelve publishers" who publish at least Atari ST software and who recently attacked a pirate business:

- Antic Software
- Batteries Included
- Digital Research
- Hippopotamus Software
- Infocom
- Megamax
- Michtron
- Procopy Quickview Systems
- Quantum
- Microsystems
- Regent Software
- Xlent Software.

Next time we'll give you a list of magazines.

NEW ATARI LIGHT

One of the best support group newsletters is the one we get from New Jersey (see the article of Donald Forbes about artificial intelligence). Here's an interesting bit of news released by the president, Bill Martin:

"A new disk magazine for 8 bit Atari's is being published. It includes 3 double sided, high quality disks per issue. The New Aladdin will be published 6 times annually at a rate of 79.00 per year."

So take notice: 79 U.S. dollars, The New Aladdin. Lamps not included.

INTERVIEW WITH A WINNER

AN IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT FOR OUR READERS

Starting with the Fall, every issue will present you a member of our group and his brain hardware.

The first one will be JESSE BURNS, an eleven-year (and a half) member, who will be by then almost twelve-year old. Jesse won the contest for the best name of our newsletter: THE CURSOR. Among the club members he beat was an eight-year old, Danielle Burns, his sister.

STAY ON LINE UNTIL FALL.

CAN YOU DRIVE AN ATARI ON MICHELIN TIRES?

A sensational discovery
by our member, Tom Loewen

Like almost all Saskatoon Atari members, Tom Loewen was suspected of being lazy when it came to writing for our newsletter. You know hacks: they poke at games, don't bother with what we used to call writing.

But, answering our insistence, Tom wrote his article and sent it in time. Moreover, it might be the best article of this issue: if you don't read anything else, be sure you went through Tom's.

Besides being a remarkable innovator, Loewen is a champion of understatement. Here's how he starts: I had a slight problem with my disk drive: it stopped working. That's like saying, "my grandfather had a slight health problem: we organized a nice funeral." Let's listen to the man.

HOW I APPLIED CARDIAC RESUSCITATION TO MY DISK DRIVE WITHOUT REALLY SPENDING MONEY

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx
by TOM LOEWEN
xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Several months ago I had a slight problem with my INDUS GT disk drive: it stopped working.

That model has several lights on the front panel, and none of them lit up.

What could have happened?

My first guess was that the power supply had unplugged (I was half right).

After checking all the connections (and finding nothing wrong) I decided to get fancy and dug out my multi-meter.

A few checks and surprize! surprize!--no power coming in.

After spending an hour or so in carefulness--trying to cut the box open along the seams--I got mad. (Editor's note: It can happen to SASG members too, it seems.)

I cut the top off with a hacksaw!

I found out the #@*&# box was filled with epoxy, of all things, and hence beyond repair. This also explained why the power supply weighed as much as the actual disk drive.

Problem: How do I get the drive working again?

(I was getting tired of using only one drive after being spoiled by having two drives.) I tried to get a replacement power supply. I tried all the computer stores in Saskatoon including stores for the "other" computers. (Editor's note: We decline any responsibility for Mr. Loewen's opinion about the Saskatoon computer stores. We will refuse to come as witnesses at his trial. However, we will bring him snacks at the jail in the hours allowed for outside visitors.)

No luck with the S'toon stores. The INDUS drive uses an unusual voltage. To be exact, 11.5 volts.

Now 11.5 is very close to 12 volts. Why not use a car battery charger or battery eliminator for CB radios?

But car battery charges are not regulated that good. (Editor's note: We're not responsible for Mr. Loewen's opinion about car batteries. He didn't mean to offend any battery or battery supplier of Saskatoon.) Not well regulated, batteries might put out as much as 15 volts! Such a diet definitely would not do the drive's electronics much good! The batteries, compared to computer power supplies, are not

filtered very well. (Ed. note: No allusion is implied about Saskatoon's baseball batteries, batters, battered wives or Canadian ships' batteries of guns: any resemblance is fictious and unintended.)

Oh, well, 11.5 volts was only Plan #1. Now for Plan #2, a battery eliminator. How about it?

No good! Battery eliminators are regulated, that's good, but like for many other regulations they apply to what you really don't need: in this case for 14 volts, when I needed only 12 if not 11.5. They aren't cheap and, for reasons I won't confess, I desired a cheap fix!! I also wasn't sure about the filtering quality. So much for Plan #2!

What now? Well, I thought, why not use power supply from an electronics supply store?

I checked and one would have worked, but ooooooooh! the price! (Ed. note: No allusion to S'toon electronics shops' prices!) It would cost half the price of a new disk drive, not exactly a cheap fix!

Well, a good idea while it lasted. Now what?

Hm, how about a car battery? It puts out 12.6 volts when fully charged. That's about one volt more than the original power supply.

The worst that could happen: it would burn out the drive--and the drive was useless anyhow without a power supply! Also, with a car battery I wouldn't have to worry about filtering.

So I hauled out my old car battery that was collecting dust in the corner of the car shed--and TRIED IT!

HOLD YOUR BREATH!

Amazingly enough, it worked!

Well, too good to be true.

The battery was well beyond a middle-age crisis: whether it did any job or not, it was getting exhausted twice a week. Yes, you read well: even if it didn't do a thing, I had to recharge it twice a week. But it didn't confess so from the beginning. No light, no warning. The poor computer was just giving me "DEVICE DONE" and other nonsense messages. My computer was embarrassed to speak openly about the old battery's condition, or maybe it wasn't programmed to do so: anyhow, it was taking on itself all the blame, as computers usually do.

Finally, I realized this recharging was starting to be a pain in the neck and other connective parts, so I decided to take the splurge: I bought a battery. Don't insult me, don't believe I bought a really new one: it was a cheap, reconditioned piece of history. I've been exploiting it ever since. Modest, it doesn't ask for too much food: one recharge lasts for about four months if I don't become abusive. The drive has been working PERFECTLY.

At the time, the total cost of repair represented about one-fifth the price of a new Atari 1050 disk drive.

I use double density for my own programs and would have had to buy a doubler to get the same type of replacement disk drive. (Editor's note: That's no allusion to our member Roy Pugh, who seemingly bought a doubler and got a little burned with it.)

That's what I consider a reasonably cheap fix.

"AND RIGHTLY SO!" SINGS THE SASKATOON ATARI SUPPORT GROUP CHORUS. "COULD YOU VISIT US AT HOME FROM TIME TO TIME, DEAR TOM? WE HAVE SOME PROBLEMS. COULD YOU ADAPT AN OLD CAR CIGARETTE-LIGHTER SO AS TO BLOSSOM OUR MONOCHROME MONITOR INTO FULL COLORS, INCLUDING A LITTLE WINDOW FOR CURRENT TV PROGRAMS ON CHANNEL 22?"

COMPATIBILITY, CONNECTIVITY AND... ATARISM

by The Cheeky Chip

<><><><><><><><><><><><><><><><>

Note. The Cheeky Chip is not a real name. In the old times it was called a "pen name." Now it's a WPN, word processing name, belonging to a distinguished personality whose name will be revealed in proper time.

<><><><><><><><><><><><><><><><>

Last April, after our famous elections, we gossiped in the Kelsey backyard about the Atari shops left in Saskatoon.

Now don't imagine we spoke about that shop, you know which one. We couldn't have spoken about Amnesy Lane, since last time I phoned them they said they don't deal with any Atari eight bits anymore. (Like Maxim's in Paris telling you, Non, Monsieur, notre chef doesn't cook hamburjaers.) And we didn't gossip about Commo-Data, since they prepare to switch to the I'll Be Am Too clones. And not about Peter, the only one of the twelve apostles who still seems to believe in the resurrection of the Ataris, at least in their ST embodiment.

We all agreed these people need to make a living, and "the fastest growing city in Canada" (that's Saskatoon, you know) can't grow fast enough to be a market for little two-bit games and newly packed old software. Until here, we agreed.

But one of us--and I won't give his name, since lynching is forbidden by our statutes--said that the smart business persons realize that Atari is doomed. Everybody goes compatible! Even Atari, as announced by the previous issue of our newsletter, goes compatible! It makes a new type, I.B.M. compatible! It's the way the Universe is headed! The Sun and the Milky Way will cool down and fall in a black hole if they don't shine full compatibility!

Instantly, the other gossipers went wild, mad, lions, real Atatigers! How can one talk about a smart computer such as Atari going paws up just because it's different?

To make it shorter, I'll give you the essence of the arguments, let's say between two persons only. For simplicity, let's call them Plato and Socrates.

Plato: How can you sentence Atari to doom just because it's different? That's what hit I.B.M. now and got down its profits: the clones chase it to wipe out its last difference!

Socrates: Yeah?

Plato: Yeah! Two years ago IBM smiled under its moustache, proud that the other guys swore to be compatible with whom? with IBM--hence, the real thing, classic Coke, diamonds and not look-alikes! But then came the duck computer disaster: if it looked like a duck, it sounded like a duck and it processed like a duck, it had to be a duck! Why pay more?

Socrates: To be in! Why buy a little Chevy when B.M.W. means to be hip, yuppie and dink!

Plato: What's dink?

Socrates: Ancient Greek abbreviation for Double Income No Kids Couples.

Plato: Socrates, I'll sock it to you! IBM now tries TO ESCAPE THE CURSE OF COMPATIBILITY! Some dealers tried even to call it compatability, as if somebody would pay a thousand golden coins more for a letter difference. That's why they introduced those new ads and that new word: C O N N E C T I V I T Y ! On TV, they say now that they have the perfect connectivity. That really doesn't mean a thing other than the need to give a new face to interface, jack, cable, hardware handshake, soft hardshake or whatever you want to call tying a computer to another.

Socrate: By the way, have you seen those new little ties for computers, cute little costumes with lapels, buttons, ties and what not for a she or he computer? High

design for overnight dust covers.

Plato: Sock, try to concentrate. IBM's fight to find a new name shows it wants to be different. And that's why Atari will beat the others! It gives you more bang for the buck, more bit for the bet! It's original!

Socrates: But the compu fan wants to be with the crowd! Why should I have a superior Beta video and not find any free tape at the library? Enter any video store and you'll find lots of VHS and hardly any Beta. Atari is the Sony and Beta of computers: better than all of them and certifying that good guys don't win! You won't find so many games, programs, whatever for Atari, as you find for IBM, Commodore and especially the MacIntosh!

Plato: Don't give me that applesauce! Remember the battle of the telephones? How come the touch tone beat the old rotary disk system? People liked it! Now mark my words: touch tone was a minority! A rarity! But it won! Atari is more rare, but it will win!

Socrates: Plato, why do you have to deliver platitudes? Touch tone enabled people to communicate no less than the rotaries. When your sensory mate buzzed you for a little meeting over the week-end you didn't care if s/he spoke from a rotary. With an Atari you're perfectly happy as long as you remain a philosopher: self-contained, no need to communicate. But as soon as you want some new software gadget, as soon as you call another computer, they start to ask you about bauds, compatibility and what not. Have you ever seen how an IBM, even a junior, looks at an Atari? Nowadays you can't go to the washroom without carrying an interface!

We'll leave our readers in suspense.

But we invite them to bring in their input, feedback and so on!

What do you see winning in the future? A computer DIFFERENT from the others--just a little stronger maybe--or one that makes you feel NORMAL, COMPATIBLE with whatever comes your way, from a microsoft program to a macrohard mate!

Or maybe all that we'll ask from future computers will be the little bow tie and a new type of overnight shirt?

Speak up, ladies! You know men are too shy to write in the newsletter! All the hope stays with you! Write to your newsletter.

FOR COMPUTER RIGHTS!

by Karl Capek-Robotski

Recently, on the first page of The Globe and Mail, the national newspaper of Canada, I admired Ki, a kitten, and a monkey, this one anonymous.

Ki got publicity because she or he (the photo lacked precision) was comforted by a human female, Anne Doncaster, the leader of an animal-rights group. The leader&comforter's photo dominated the page. The first part of the article, "Nobody's laughing now" (May 4th) seems to belong to a new species of journalism, in which either you attack a movement all the way, with no word in its favor, or you praise it with sanctimony not used even in divinity matters: either go to hell or to heaven, we in the media are out of purgatories.

While past news told us one-sidedly about animal-rights activists who invaded Kentucky Fried Chicken stores shouting "Meat is Murder!" slashing the tires of the criminal meat-eaters and the vinyl of the heinous store seats--or the gang that beat a guy in Guelph, the guy who didn't tolerate on his grass littering slogans about a neighbour, university professor involved in medical research using animals--now the article lauds the animal-rights groups as hundred percent magnificent:

"Animal-rights activism essentially seeks a sane relationship between man and animal." (After what happened with the relationship between man and animal in Africa, AIDS and all this, we find the program for a "sane relationship" perfectly legitimate. A few years ago, we trendily used to say that everything goes as long as it happens between consenting adults. But how can you be sure that an adult goat consents to what you do to him?)

The root cause of the evils of civilization comes from treating living beings like objects, "sexism, racism, chauvinism, consumerism of pets" or--how the animal-rights people say about the arrogance of the humans-- "speciesism."

To show the new gained sophistication of the animal-rights activists, the article says that they, the humans I mean, tolerate exploitation of the animals--yes, they started to tolerate putting animals to work for the benefit of humans!--but solely in the Third World. The activists have accounts to settle only with the Western World. And not even with all of it. The Indians, the natives I mean, don't they live in this part of the world too? Don't they...short hesitation...don't they hunt, trap, skin and somehow even eat poor animals? Here's the answer of the anti-exploitation activist, as registered by the Globe's journalist:

"Neither does she want natives to abandon their way of life or become vegetarians.

"Subsistence hunting is fine, most animal-rights activists agree, as long as the kill is used for nothing more than to feed and clothe the hunters, not for cash."

In the same vein, some farmers get a pardon for growing cattle--it's just the cruel system that educated us to go at Bonanza, while milking comes from a stereotype we force our sucklings into when we push the bottle on them--and we are all reassured that, despite the fact that plants are alive, it's perfectly okay to eat them (and, I add, when we speak with them, we could use some dirty words now and then, provided they are not specieist.)

COMPUTERISM: THE DISCRIMINATION AGAINST COMPUTERS.

While animals get a preferential treatment because of the macro character of the whales (you can't pretend not to notice a whale), our micros suffer an insulting and damaging treatment just because they become smaller and smaller. (There's no society for the rights of viruses and bacteria--and that's the size of it, so to say, that's where miniaturization brings computers! And take note that some bacteriae are extremely necessary, helping both human and animal digestion!)

Now please notice the following:

1. Whenever something goes wrong, the bureaucrats blame the computer.

There are no computer operators, no programmers, no clerks, no accountants, no managers: all these people you used to see on the payroll vanish when there's something to blame. "We're sorry, Sir. (We're sorry, Madam.) It's because of the computer." Obviously, they invented computers to have whom to blame. (At Chernobyl, by a splendid exception, Soviet authorities blamed "human error" just because they didn't have enough computers.)

2. Whenever the bureaucrats refuse to do something for you, they say it's because of the computer.

"Sorry, we can't change it, the computer has been programmed this way."

3. If they got drunk over the night, didn't come in the morning or just feel like sending you to hell, the recorded tape merely has to say, "Sorry, the computer broke down," followed by recreational music in the background.

4. Forget the clerks and look at the academics: if they create an idea too stupid to recognize it's theirs, they concoct a "computer simulation." "Feeding data into a computer, Prof. F. Eces calculated all mankind will be extinct in 10 years, without any Planet to be buried in, because rock music depletes the rock soil and its nourishing reserves eaten by coal plants fueled with recycled nucleo-proteins and nuclear waste regulated by government cuts." Nobody wonders what the guy shoved into the poor disk drive. If I were fed what some computers swallow I'll probably calculate I was extinct before the birth of Julius Caesar.

5. Scrabbling between the lines of what their secretaries processed, the psychological academics repeat computers are dehumanizing, alienating, just because they, the academics, happen to like the secretaries more than their wives and who else to blame if not the system that leaves computers govern our lives, disk drives and sex drives? They churn this out on word processors.

6. And if the wives drink, smoke or pick up the wrong neighbour and get a child with three ears, who's to blame? Why, of course, three years ago these mothers worked in front of a video display!

7. They write in magazines that computers cut out conversations between husband and wife. Hubby pokes or reads the screen bulletins! And what superb conversations we had, between wife and sexist listener, before computers arrived! But now the computers work to cut down our, how should I say, reproductive glands. A modem beats any condom, hands down. Why is the growth rate declining in the Western World? Computers engulfed foreplay and all what's supposed to follow. Why is the Population Bomb exploding in The Third World? Why, obviously, because they don't have computers: with no other game in the village, husband and wife have to keep conversing.

7. Some parents or teachers forbid children to play video, watch TV or spend too much time in front of a computer, 'cause they'll get stupid. The only way to make kids smarter is to forbid them computer games and to carry them at demonstrations. Computers take away childrens' freedom. Children get really free and full of political awareness when adults hang their slogans on the kids' necks and keep them away from computers and other dehumanizing devices.

Shortly, how can we defend computers?

First, as any activist knows, we must devise "strategies." Get media coverage. Get government funds. Get media coverage for cuts in government funds. Show computer programs lying in the street.

Our whole Plan will be published in the Fall. Think until then! Ask your computer new suggestions! It's time for its synthetizer voice to be heard!

MBA Artificial Intelligence

by Donald Forbes -- JACG, September 1986

The history books will long remember the Indianopolis 500-mile Speedway race, traditionally associated with Memorial Weekend.

Not because the winner, for the first time, made it in less than three hours (500 divided by three is almost 167) at an average speed of more than 170 miles an hour.

Not because it was the closest finish in history. The winner beat number two by 1.4 seconds and number three by 1.8 seconds.

Here is the real reason the race made history. The name "Symbolics" painted on the front of the winning car signalled the entry of artificial intelligence into the race. Symbolics Inc. of concord Mass. teamed up with the racers to put a computer in the pit area and another in the winning car during the practice runs last April.

Sixteen sensors in the car measured rpms, suspension movement of each wheel, which gear was engaged and when the shifting took place, as well as six measurements of the front and rear aerodynamics, capturing data 20 times a second. The software application uses LISP, one of the leading artificial intelligence languages, with heavy reliance on color graphics. As the experts put it "Any better understanding of the car's performance translates directly into the competitive edge."

Next year, according to reporter Bill Dooley of MISWeek, you can expect that during the actual race the driver will have a computer and copilot.

Artificial intelligence has gone commercial in the last five years. Auto racing is one of the more spectacular applications. But the real money is in business applications.

If you are a recent PhD graduate from one of the top AI schools (MIT, Stanford, or Carnegie-Mellon) you can expect to make from $55,000 to $60,000 a year. The demand is for builders of expert systems, and the nation's fifty-or-so gurus in this field are busily at work. The demand for expert systems, rather than in other areas of artificial intelligence, such as: experts in natural language, speech input/output, vision systems, automatic theorem proving, automatic programming and supercomputers.

The real invasion is in the PC software that is showing up on the desks of more and more business managers. What is interesting is that the business managers do not realize that artificial intelligence is being used to help them with their tasks: they want software that is user-friendly and don't care how it is done.

One extreme example is Mindreader, a wordprocessor for businessmen who hate to type, and who find that most of their correspondence is taken up by stock phrases that can be stored in a computer.

Niccolo Machiavelli carved his own undying reputation as the supreme realist, and you wonder whether Kalman Toth, the Hungarian programmer who invented Mindreader, might have been one of his pupils. Did you know that about 130 English words account for about half of typical business writing? Did you know that about 95% of typical business writing requires little more than 2,500 words? Furthermore, most businessmen cannot type. And most of the rest are hunt-and-peck artists who cannot reach 40 words per minute. So why

not develop a wordprocessor just for them!

Mindreader does just that. The menu is modeled after the set of buttons on a Coke machine (what you see is what you get). The menu consists of a set of lines along the top and bottom of the screen.

Push the Roldex key and your address file shows up on the screen. Pick a name and hit a couple of keys and you have the beginning of a letter with date and address that starts off with "My dear Sam:". You type "I am in" and the wordprocessor instantly displays suggested words: interested, informed, inquiring, indebted...and lets you make a choice with one key press. The words are offered in the most probable order, depending on what you chose in the past. You can also add your own vocabulary,, depending on whether you are an architect, osteopath, zoologist, in the real estate business or snake oil business.

This wordprocessor with its less-is-more philosophy (in compiled BASIC and assembler) would drive a competent typist up the wall. But then a professional secretary uses a professional wordprocessor. At a much more professional price than a money-saving $65.

One popular database package is called Q&A to suggest that it can provide answers to your questions. The critical part of the software is programmed in LISP, the leading AI language. Hence author Dr. Gary Hendrix can claim that "there isn't another database that gives you the extra help Q&A does, because no other database uses "natural language processing," an advanced artificial intelligence technology, in such a practical way."

As a result, you can ask a question in plain English ("Show me the houses that have monthly rent between $800 and $1200, listed by rent and by bedrooms") and the software will translate your query into a program that will pull the data from the disk. If your request is ambiguous or unclear, the software asks for clarification. You can define your own synonyms: 'gimme' or 'I want' can replace words like find, seek, select or retrieve.

PARADOX is one of the new relational database packages that is beginning to crowd dBase III, the leader. This program is not marketed as an artificial intelligence or knowledge system, but uses artificial intelligence techniques to control hidden agenda. Using this approach, the package can easily be used by someone without database, programming or knowledge engineering experience to solve retrieval problems. The user defines the problem by imitating given examples, and PARADOX then uses heuristics to write its own procedure to solve the problem.

The program was written in the C language by Richard Shostack and Robert Schwartz, who have been ten years at the Stanford Research Institute. "We brought to the personal computer a significant new technology that does much of the thinking for you. Known in artificial intelligence circles as machine reasoning, this technology represents a major breakthrough in database power. At the heart of PARADOX is a 'heuristic query optimizer' and a 'program synthesizer.' You just let PARADOX know what you want, and PARADOX seeks the best and fastest path to your answer.

Javelin is a high-powered spreadsheet package ("Javelin is to Lotus 1-2-3 what 1-2-3 was to Visicalc") written in the C language which makes clever use of artificial intelligence techniques to take care of some of the tedious data entry: once a variable name is typed, it never needs to be retyped. Enter "jan86" and Javelin spells out "January 1986" and then press the return key to get "February 1986" and so on.

A decade ago Dan Bricklin made history, and a fortune for himself, with Visicalc. The story goes that Visicalc sold more Apples

than Apple sold Visicalc. Today spreadsheets are still the rage. Lotus 1-2-3 is still the biggest seller, although the military will not buy it because it is copy protected. Why does that make a difference?

The organizers of the Liberty Weekend fireworks found that "the manipulations and paperwork can be terrific" when they tried to make sure that each burst appeared in the sky at the right moment. For the past year they have been working on a computerized solution. They began with COBOL program which they then linked to a dBase III database manager (to record the inventory) and a Lotus 1-2-3 spreadsheet. Now they can delete each rocket from the inventory as they use it, and keep a balance between the number of forceful Japanese rockets and delicate Chinese projectiles, using spreadsheet formulas to keep track of the weight and thrust of each rocket as the show progresses.

Can you imagine the military in combat cancelling an artillery barrage because their spreadsheet diskette failed and they would have to wait six weeks for Lotus to mail them a backup?

Watch for artificial intelligence, and particularily expert systems, over the next few years to begin crowding spreadsheets for the number one spot.